

GOD GAVE THEM UP

We're living during strange times. I know that's been said throughout history, but it doesn't make it feel any less real. Sound changes can take millennia, while evil changes happen overnight. When evil seems to be creeping in, one must remember their spiritual armor. We don't put it on for show - it is used daily. As Christians, we have the challenge of not panicking without becoming complacent. It can be challenging to do. You've got to know how to love someone who does something you hate. You've got to understand how to show that love while demonstrating your disapproval and evil, and that's not always easy. You've got to check yourself. You've got to protect yourself. You've got to keep yourself unspotted. It all begins with God's word because you've got to know what you're dealing with to proceed. We're doing a series of studies from Romans because it contains so many classic passages that help us in our daily walk with the Lord. Today, we're looking at what happens among humanity that can lead to God giving them up. We'll remind ourselves what to look out for. We have precise warnings - a recipe for disaster that we can all avoid, though many we live around have not.

Paul wrote of not being ashamed of the gospel because it's the saving message for all humanity. And we need to be saved, don't we? Saved from the grip of Satan. Saved from the mess we've all made because we've all fallen short. What Paul does at this point is paint the picture of mankind. It's an age-old story but a reoccurring one. It was penned 2,000 years ago, but principally, it could have been written yesterday.

Our Part:

Read Romans 1:18-32. This is what happens to people in general. Let's work this passage backward and see if it sounds familiar:

- Unrighteousness
- Evil
- Covetousness
- Malice
- Envy
- Murder
- Strife
- Deceit
- Maliciousness
- Gossips
- Slanderers
- Haters of God
- Insolent
- Haughty
- Boastful
- Inventors of evil
- Disobedient to parents
- Foolish

- Faithless
- Heartless
- Ruthless

How many news stories are going through your head right now. Or this is why you don't read the news. Do any acquaintances come to mind? Friends? Dare I say . . . family members. I've left this one at the end . . . sound like you? I pray that we are not walking in any of these, but we used to do some of them. We may still fall into one of these categories occasionally (although I hope you haven't murdered anyone lately). We want to remember that Paul calls out everyone under the sun in chapters 1-3 (including himself). But we still need to finish.

Paul discusses the sin of homosexuality. It's interesting how he specifically draws attention to this act. There are natural passions that God has given us to be enjoyed in the marriage bed. That's between a man and his wife. Not between two women. Not between two men. Others have tried to argue that sex outside of marriage is what's being considered. Why not simply leave it at fornication? That would cover all sin. Why point out specifically women with women and men with men? Others have attempted to argue that it wasn't consensual. But the text paints the picture of men having passions for one another. The argument doesn't hold water. This sounds familiar. Brethren, look at our country. Does anyone else feel like we're living in bizarre times? We can't define what a male or female is anymore. We have kids identifying as animals, and everyone's pretending like it's normal. I remember reading an article 2 years ago that drew attention to a first wedding of its kind because of the odd way the two individuals identified. Yet, it was simply a man marrying a woman. I feel like I'm living in a bizarre dream. The truth is - we're living in an evil and perverted world. We're still not done.

Idolatry. We're not used to literal idol worship in this country. Still, the principle of creating idols and putting oneself over God isn't unique. But idolatry was familiar to his audience. Think about Israel's history when the Law was given on Mount Sinai. Moses returned to a golden calf (Psalm 106:19-23)! We have people who worship themselves. We have those who make things of this world their gods. We sacrifice to our own desires. I'm not trying to use shocking speech, but the reality is we're offering our own children to fulfill our own desires. It's called abortion. We're selling our souls to the devil for personal gain. We're losing our integrity.

God's Part:

And what does God do? He gave them up. This phrase is used 3 times in the text: vs. 24, 26, 28. One of the most terrifying ways God punishes us while on earth is by simply allowing us to create our own hell. Some of you want to live as long as possible. Count me out. People get so caught up asking if God punishes countries who go down the road we have. What if He lets you go?

What do we learn?

Acknowledging God:

Only a fool tries to bandage a problem. The wise get to the root cause. If you want to know how this happens, we need to turn our attention back to vs.21-23. This is where it all begins. We don't appreciate the power of this passage. It starts with us. Can members of the church fall into this trap? Absolutely. People can get caught up in this while attending services. Many are too afraid to completely abandon the church, so they live among us. We need to check our lives today. Are we living as though we don't know? Are we suppressing the truth? Do we not honor God or give thanks to Him? Do we have empty and foolish minds? Who do we worship?

The Gospel Is Needed:

Not a different government. Not more conservative colleges (though changes could be helpful occasionally). People need to know the mess they're in. They need to be confronted with the realities of evil and its consequences. They need to see how they're in bondage. They need to see their need for salvation. They need Jesus.

So, what about you? Where are you today? What will you do about it?